

2007

INDIANA

WHIP

GUIDANCE

(v. 1.02)

GENERAL PROGRAM CRITERIA

- The maximum cost share limit that a landowner can receive through WHIP is \$25,000. However, in instances where the participant has a Wildlife Habitat Development Plan with exceptional benefits to wildlife, the State Conservationist can authorize additional WHIP funds over the \$25,000 cap. If after two rounds of funding, there is no significant backlog of applications, a landowner may submit an additional application which would bring the total funds requested on all their applications in excess of the \$25,000 cap.
- The **minimum** cost share for any WHIP application will remain at \$1,000. Applications for cost share for less than this amount will not be considered.
- Financial assistance funds received in the state will be divided into three groups. Seventy five percent of the total state allocation will go to private landowners and government and Not for Profit (NFP) groups. These funds will be further divided with seventy five percent be set aside for private landowners and the remaining twenty five percent for government and NFP. The remaining 25 percent of the state allocation will be set aside for treatment of invasive species. If after two rounds of funding, there is unobligated money in either of the groups, the money will be used to fund remaining applications in any group according to the ranking scores.
- Weed control after tree or shrub establishment will continue to be offered. The option to select with or without weed control is available for second and third year if needed based on the management plan. The amount of cost-share for tree and shrub establishment will be the same regardless of whether second and/or third year weed control is needed.
- The ranking process for WHIP applications will be the national ranking process available in ProTracts. All new applications will be ranked using this process. There will be National and State ranking issues. There will not be local issues. The State issues were based on the Statewide Priority page from the obsolete WHIP Ranking Worksheet.
- WHIP will no longer use the average cost (AM) cost type. The cost list will be the same as the EQIP Program based on an average cost (AC). The cost list will be based on 75 percent of the average cost determined from historical data collected over the past year through the EQIP and WHIP programs.
- WHIP, alone or in combination with other Federal sources, shall not exceed 75 percent of the cost for essential practices in habitat development. In special cases, as determined by the State Conservationist, where circumstances merit additional cost-share assistance to achieve the intended goals of the project, direct Federal sources may contribute to the cost of the practice above the 75 percent limit. Note that total funding can not exceed 100% of the cost of the practice.
- Contracts are agreements that are five (5) to ten (10) years in length. Note that, ALL components of the contract must be completed as least one (1) year prior to the end of the contract. This is a change from the past when all practices were to be completed two years prior to the end of the contract.

- Land enrolled in Federal conservation easement programs such as CRP, WRP, GRP, and the EWP Floodplain Easement Program are not eligible for WHIP funding. The State Conservationist may fund a WHIP contract along with a GRP contract if the following two requirements are met:
 - Wildlife habitat is the primary resource concern.
 - The GRP contract is for an easement.
- Practices shall meet NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) Standards and Specifications. In addition, all practices will be subject to the limitations and guidelines as described in "Criteria for Practice Eligibility".
- All Wildlife Habitat Development Plans (WHDP) will be signed by an IDNR District Wildlife Biologist or their designate. The WHDP will identify the target wildlife species, and the habitat development and management needs of that species.
- Any practice initiated before cost-share agreement approval is ineligible for financial assistance. However, the State Conservationist may waive this provision when all of the following conditions are met:
 - The applicant filed a WHIP application before initiating the practice;
 - The practice is established in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications;
 - The practice is included in the wildlife habitat development plan; and
 - The applicant understands that the practice is ineligible for cost-share assistance if the agreement is not approved.
- All practices shall be planned in the contract when a participant's application is accepted.
- Planting fescue for any practice is not eligible for points or cost-share.
- Practice life spans for WHIP are the same as those listed in the National EQIP manual. Practice life spans for practices not listed in the EQIP manual will be for the life of the contract.
- Under State Issues, Question 8, "Protected Conservation Areas" include: Federal/State wildlife refuges, forests, parks and nature preserves; lands protected by The Nature Conservancy; or other lands protected by a minimum 30 year easement with wildlife management objectives. Classified Wildlife and Classified Forest areas are not deed-restrictive easements, and therefore not considered protected conservation areas.

CRITERIA FOR PRACTICE ELIGIBILITY

1. Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (647)

- Early Successional Habitat Development/Management practices will be established according to the FOTG Standard 647 - *Early Successional Habitat Development/Management*.
- Fields that contain greater than 20% fescue will not be ranked and are not eligible for cost-share. This limitation is intended to encourage **conversion** of fescue fields, rather than to just apply a disturbance practice.
- Strip mowing or strip disking of filter strips, riparian buffers, field borders, waterways, wildlife corridors, or any areas planted to woody vegetation will not be eligible for cost-share.
- Lands being grazed or used for hay production are not eligible for cost-share.
- When planning for **Inter-seeding Forbs**, the needed site preparation will also be entered into the plan. For example, if strip disking will be performed as site preparation to inter-seeding forbs, then enter **both** strip disking and inter-seeding forbs.
- See the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Job Sheets on the NRCS Biology Homepage (<http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/biology/biology.html>) for additional implementation guidance.
- **Prescribed Burning** will be completed according to the FOTG Standard 338 - *Prescribed Burning*.
 - ⇒ Riparian forest buffers are not eligible for prescribed burning.
 - ⇒ Points may be awarded for prescribed burning of hayland containing warm season grasses (WSG).
 - ⇒ Fields are eligible for cost share for Prescribed Burning only once every three years on the same acreage during the contract period. Points can be awarded for each time the acreage is burned if burning is conducted during the contract period.
 - ⇒ A copy of the prescribed burn plan must be present before the burning takes place. Cost share will not be paid for burning without a prescribed burning plan.
 - ⇒ **NOTE: NRCS employees are not authorized to write burn plans or assist with igniting or spreading of fire for private landowners. The NRCS State Forester will be contacted before installing this practice.**

2. Fence (382)

- Livestock shall be excluded according to the FOTG Standard 382 - *Fence*.
- Cost-share and points are only eligible for fencing of streams, woodland, wetlands, wildlife lands, and hayland where livestock are permanently excluded. Fencing of pastureland is not eligible for WHIP funding.
- WHIP eligibility for fencing is limited to operations where livestock are present during the evaluation period or have been present within the past 12 months.
- Fencing streams and wetlands requires a minimum setback or buffer area of 33 feet from the top of the bank of streams or edge of wetland area.
- Cost-sharing for temporary fencing is not allowed.

3. Field Border (386)

- Field Borders will be established according to the FOTG Standard 386 - *Field Border*.
- Because the primary purpose of this practice is to provide a wildlife habitat, the minimum width of the Filter Border will be 33 feet.
- Livestock shall be excluded according to the FOTG Standard 382 - *Fence*.
- After establishment, *vegetative* field borders:
 - ⇒ Will not have more than 1/3 of the area mowed in any one year.
 - ⇒ Will not be mowed more than once a year.
 - ⇒ Must be mowed at least once during the contract period to prevent woody encroachment.
 - ⇒ Will not be mowed during the primary ground-nesting season of March 1 through July 15th.
 - ⇒ Will be mowed to a minimum height of six (6) inches for cool season grasses (CSG) plantings, and to a minimum height of eight (8) inches for WSG plantings. A 12" minimum winter height must also be maintained.

5. Field Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (380)

- Field Windbreaks practices will follow the **establishment procedures and spacing** in FOTG Standard 380 – *Windbreaks/Shelterbelt Establishment*.
- FOTG Standard 645 – *Upland Wildlife Habitat Management* will be used to determine **tree and shrub species**.
- Because the primary purpose of this practice is to provide a wildlife habitat, the minimum number of rows will be four. At least one row will be a shrub and one row will be a hard mast tree species.
- The minimum width will be 50 feet when the primary purpose of the field windbreak is to provide a **wildlife corridor**.

4. Filter Strip (393)

- Filter Strips will be established according to the FOTG Standard 393 - *Filter Strip*.
- Because the primary purpose of this practice is to provide a wildlife habitat, the minimum width of the Filter Strip will be 33 feet.
- Filter Strip establishment by natural regeneration is not permitted for purposes of assigning points or cost-share.
- Livestock shall be excluded according to the FOTG Standard 382 - *Fence*.
- After establishment, *vegetative* filter strips:
 - ⇒ Will not have more than 1/3 of the area mowed in any one year.
 - ⇒ Will not be mowed more than once a year.
 - ⇒ Must be mowed at least once during the contract period to prevent woody encroachment.
 - ⇒ Will not be mowed during the primary nesting season of March 1 through July 15th.
 - ⇒ Will be mowed to a minimum height of six (6) inches for CSG plantings, and to a minimum height of eight (8) inches for WSG plantings. A 12" minimum winter height must also be maintained.

5. Hedgerow Planting (422)

- Hedgerow Plantings will be established according to the FOTG Standard 422 - *Hedgerow Planting*.
- The Hedgerow will be established to at least two (2) species of vegetation with a minimum width of 15 feet. If the hedgerow is to be used as a wildlife corridor, the minimum width will be 50 feet.

6. Mine Shaft and Adit Closing (457)

- Mine and cave gate closings will be established according to the FOTG Standard 457 - *Mine Shaft and Adit Closing*.
- This standard will only be used to install bat friendly gating of vertical and horizontal underground openings, to protect bat hibernation sites, and to close openings for human safety while maintaining access for wildlife species.
- **NOTE: The NRCS State Biologist will be contacted before proceeding with this practice.**

7. Pest Management (595)

- Invasive species control will be established under FOTG Standard 595 – *Pest Management*.
- Area of treatment will be a best estimate of the total area of infestation. If a 20 acre tract has several small areas of infestation, do not consider the entire 20 acres as being treated. Estimate the total acres by aggregating the small areas. This can also be done by estimating the percent of the total area that is affected. If it is estimated that 20 percent of the area is affected, then use 4 acres (20 acres times 20 percent = 4 acres) as the treated acres.
- Wildlife Habitat Development Plans (WHDP) are to be developed after an application is funded. The WHDP can be prepared by the District Conservationist. All plans should have the concurrence of an IDNR District Biologist. All kudzu plans will be developed by Ken Cote, Nursery Inspector and Compliance Officer, IDNR Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology.
- If chemical control is to be used, label directions are to be followed.
- Kudzu control will consist of 5 years of treatment. Sites must be 2 acres or less in size, be easily accessible (within 0.1 mile of a roadway), and more than 50 feet from a body of water (stream, pond, wetland, etc.).
- Other controlled invasives to be cost-shared under WHIP are divided into two groups as follows:
 - Group 1 –
 - Asian Bush Honeysuckle
 - Tree of Heaven
 - Autumn Olive
 - Glossy Buckthorn
 - Group 2 –
 - Multiflora Rose
 - Japanese Honeysuckle
 - Periwinkle
- Groups 1 and 2 will consist of 3 years of treatment.

8. Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats (643)

- Plans will be established according to the FOTG Standard 643 - *Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats*.

9. Riparian Forest Buffer (391)

- Riparian Forest Buffers will be established according to the FOTG Standard 391 - *Riparian Forest Buffer*.
- Natural regeneration of riparian buffers is not permitted for purposes of assigning points or cost-share.
- The planting will be considered successful if a minimum stocking rate of 300 trees per acres is achieved after three (3) years.
- Inclusion of seedlings from natural regeneration is allowable when determining planting success.
- Livestock shall be excluded with a fence according to the FOTG Standard 382 - *Fence*.
- Only sites adjacent to *perennial* streams will be eligible for WHIP funding.
- After establishment, *vegetative* components of riparian forest borders:
 - ⇒ Will not have more than 1/3 of the area mowed in any one year.
 - ⇒ Will not be mowed more than once a year.
 - ⇒ Must be mowed at least once during the contract period to prevent woody encroachment.
 - ⇒ Will not be mowed during the primary ground-nesting season of March 1 through July 15th.
 - ⇒ Will be mowed to a minimum height of six (6) inches for CSG plantings, and to a minimum height of eight (8) inches for WSG plantings. A 12" minimum winter height must also be maintained.

10. Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)

- Riparian Herbaceous Cover will be established according to the FOTG Standard 390 – *Herbaceous Riparian Cover*.

11. Shallow Water Management for Wildlife (646)

- Shallow Water Management will be established according to the FOTG Standard 646 - *Shallow Water Development for Wildlife*.
- Note that a FOTG Standard 646 Jobsheet is available on the Indiana NRCS Biology Homepage.
- Cost share is authorized for structural and vegetative components only.

12. Spring Development (574)

- Spring Developments will be established according to the FOTG Standard 574 - *Spring Development*.
- Cost share will only be allowed where livestock will be excluded from streams or wetlands that are currently being used as a watering source for livestock.
- Cost-share for pumps is not authorized.
- Cost-share is only authorized for permanently installed tanks or waterers, and not for portable tanks/waterers or above-ground pipelines.

13. Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)

- FOTG Standard 645 – *Upland Wildlife Habitat Management* **will be used to determine tree and shrub species, planting rates and spacing**, based upon the needs of the target species as identified by the District Biologist.
- To receive points for a *Bottomland Hardwood* planting, the site must have a soil that is identified in the FOTG as having a flooding frequency (any duration), and the planting specifications must contain a predominance of hard mast producing species found in Table 8d of FOTG Standard 645.
- Cost-share is authorized for mowing or herbicide treatment during the first two growing seasons after planting.

14. Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)

- FOTG Standard 645 – *Upland Wildlife Habitat Management* **will be used to determine tree, shrub, and herbaceous species, planting rates and spacing**, based upon the needs of the target species as identified by the District Biologist
- Practices containing woody vegetation will follow the **site preparation, planting dates, planting stock size and planting and storage guidelines** according to the FOTG Standard 612 - *Tree/Shrub Establishment*.

15. Wetland Creation (658)

- Wetland Creations will be established according to the FOTG Standard 658 - *Wetland Creation*.
- There is a 5 acre cap on any wetland creation.

16. Wetland Enhancement (659)

- Wetland Enhancements will be established according to the FOTG Standard 659 - *Wetland Enhancement*.
- There is a 5 acre cap on any wetland enhancement.
- Enhancement should not significantly change the primary wetland functions provided at the site.

17. Wetland Restoration (657)

- Wetland Restorations will be established according to FOTG Standard 657 - *Wetland Restoration*
- Construction of nesting islands is not eligible for cost share.

18. Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644)

- Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management projects will be established according to the FOTG Standard 644 - *Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management*.
- Cost share is authorized for structural and vegetative components only.